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SUBJECT: AU SUMMIT: AF ACTING A/S CARTER MEETS WITH AU
PEACE AND SECURITY COMMISSIONER RAMTANE LAMAMRA

Classified By: Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) Summary: AF Acting Assistant Secretary Phillip Carter, joined by Ambassador Donald Yamamoto, USAID Acting Assistant Administrator Earl Gast, and Sudan Programs Group Director Timothy Shortley, met with AU Peace and Security Commissioner Ramtane Lamamra January 31, on the margins of the AU Summit in Addis Ababa. On Mauritania and Guinea, both sides expressed concern for the evident erosion of will to oppose the Mauritanian and Guinean coups in some quarters of the EU and AU. They agreed that security cooperation between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda is positive but not without risk. Lamamra struck a somewhat more optimistic tone on the recent agreement between Zimbabwean President Mugabe and MDC-leader Tsvangirai and had had positive news on the status of AMISOM deployment in Somalia. On Sudan, the AU is planning to establish a high level panel, chaired by South African President Thabo Mbeki, to advise Sudan on how to deal with impunity issues related to the pursuit of the war in Darfur. Carter expressed skepticism, and told Lamamra the United States is not inclined to change its position on Article XVI deferral of an International Criminal Court warrant for the arrest of Sudanese President Bashir, stressing that Bashir has made very little progress since the indictment was first issued in July 2008. End Summary.

MAURITANIA AND GUINEA

[12](#). (C) Lamamra said that the AU agreed with the United States that coups are a scourge, but member states have their own views and some are seeking to protect their own self-interests by taking a more accommodating view on the coups in Mauritania and Guinea. He noted that the European Union was the first to show differences in opinion, and the African Union's unity is starting to show cracks. With respect to the EU, Lamamra and Carter agreed that Spain was creating the most trouble, but that even France, which had shown leadership, was showing internal divisions over how to respond to the coup in Mauritania. With respect to the AU, Lamamra said Senegal has played a spoiler role from the beginning, while Tanzania had made the mistake of receiving Mauritanian pro-coup parliamentarians and making the ill-advised statement that the only way out is elections, which played into the hands of the coup leaders. Algeria is trying to strike a balance between its counterterrorism interests and its opposition to the coup. Carter said it is important for the EU and the AU to take a leadership position against coups as a matter of principle.

[13](#). (C) With respect to Guinea, Carter said there is a political process which could be followed but there is no leadership, the coup leaders are not being true to their word, and there are signs of narcotraffickers seeking to consolidate

their power base in the county. Lamamra said a contact group on Guinea had been established, which he hoped would be able to make progress. In response to some member states which had expressed reservations about sanctions because of the effect they might have on ordinary citizens, Lamamra recounted he had told the AU withholding a visa from a general is not going to affect the people. Carter said the USG does not see Guinea becoming a regional problem in the context of refugee fleeing into neighboring countries. Rather, the persistence of a military government and the country's economic implosion poses a greater threat to regional governments and regional economic growth. Lamamra said further that Nigeria, South Africa, Zambia, and Angola had all taken strong, principled stands against the coups. He noted that future potential coup threats could come from Niger, the Central African Republic, Malawi, Benin, and Togo.

EASTERN CONGO

14. (C) Carter thanked the AU for the constructive role AU mediator and former Tanzanian President Benjamin Mkapa has played alongside UN mediator Olusegun Obasanjo. The apparently positive results of security cooperation between the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda in Eastern Congo should not be allowed to overshadow the discussions of long-term normalization of relations between the two countries. Lamamra said he had recently told DRC President Kabila that the AU supports his approach towards territorial integrity and had strongly opposed rebel leader Laurent Nkunda's bid to take over the DRC militarily, which

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Lamamra credited as speeding Nkunda's downfall. Carter noted that Rwandan President Kagame was driven to cooperate with Kabila in Eastern Congo because the persistent conflict impinged on his bid to transform the Rwandan economy and attract foreign investment. Lamamra said Kabila needs further encouragement to work towards a durable, long-term solution.

ZIMBABWE

15. (C) Carter said the USG needs the AU to take a leadership role on Zimbabwe given the challenges that the recent agreement between Tsvangirai and Mugabe face. Lamamra said we should give the agreement a chance, acknowledging both sides have lost a lot of time. Mugabe has imposed himself on his people, while Tsvangirai has no clear vision of where he wants to go. According to Lamamra, one cannot simply attach a head -- Tsvangirai -- onto a body -- a government controlled by the ZANU-PF -- and expect the graft to take. Tsvangirai should reach out to more progressive, younger members of ZANU-PF and try to isolate the dinosaurs. As bad as the agreement is, Lamamra said, it should work. Carter said the agreement moved the center of gravity back from Pretoria to Harare, which is positive. The international community will likely be able to see firsthand just how obstreperous Mugabe is. The USG does not see a lot of bridge building on the part of ZANU-PF but agreed that the MDC must reach out to the more moderate and progressive elements of the ZANU-PF to have any hope of addressing Zimbabwe's deepening economic and social ills. He urged Lamamra to quietly go back to the Southern African Development Community leadership to say that they must remain vigilant of what transpires in Zimbabwe and to hold the new government accountable for its actions or inaction. Both agreed that the next six months will be critical. Both also shared the same concern that, given Mugabe's history, it may be only a matter of time before the situation blows up again. Lamamra added that, he steps down as President of the AU, Tanzanian President Kikwete may be able take on a greater leadership role in SADC.

SOMALIA

16. (C) Lamamra painted as good news the election of Sheikh

Sharif as President of Somalia, noting that he had had time to learn moderation, and that he was fully engaged on the Djibouti peace process. Lamamra predicted that a member of the Darod clan would be appointed as Prime Minister, while Nur Adde would probably get some role as ambassador to the UN, which was appropriate. Lamamra said he had indications Sheikh Sharif has worked back channel with the Ethiopians, and they have accepted his election. Carter said the USG is working to establish a mechanism to facilitate funding to support the establishment of a joint security force of the Unity Government. He stressed that such support would need to be fully accountable and transparent. Lamamra said that we should work with AMISOM to achieve this, but counseled against giving the task directly to AMISOM. Carter said he understood Lamamra to mean AMISOM and the Unity Government forces should play a complementary, mutually supportive role. Carter said the USG is planning to contribute USD 5 million to help Unity Government forces, while Lamamra said Algeria and Sweden had recently contributed money and in kind resources.

17. (C) Carter affirmed the goal of trying to build AMISOM's capacity. Lamamra said Algeria agreed to provide airlift to transport a third Burundian battalion in support of AMISOM in the middle of February and would provide airlift to a Ugandan battalion later in the month. With respect to the Nigerians, Lamamra said Foreign Minister Maduekwe had told him his country was interested in sending a full brigade -- three battalions -- to AMISOM, which contrasted with Carter's understanding that the Nigerians were not inclined to move forward at present with even one battalion. Lamamra said the Peace and Security Council had to a certain extent named and shamed Nigeria, which prides itself on playing a continental role. Lamamra suggested to Maduekwe that Nigeria send one battalion relatively quickly, to be followed by two additional ones. He said the Nigerians were examining this proposal.

SUDAN

18. (C) Lamamra characterized Sudan as a big headache, but said 2009 presents an opportunity, with implementation of the

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Comprehensive Peace Agreement between North and South a cornerstone. Pursuit of the ICC indictment at this juncture may be counterproductive; UN/AU Joint Chief Mediator Djibril Bassole plans to tell the UN Security Council the problem right now is not the Sudanese Government of National Unity (GNU) but the rebel groups who are refusing to negotiate. Regarding Chad and Sudan, Lamamra said the two countries are being held hostage by the rebel groups that they respectively support and, while both Chad and Sudan appear to be willing to make peace, their fates are determined -- to their detriment -- by irresponsible actions of the rebels. Lamamra said GNU insider Nafie Ali Nafie told him the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) rebel group launched its recent attack on Sudan immediately after its senior officials, return from a visit to the United States, with the implication that they were somehow encouraged to do so by the United States. Carter ridiculed this assertion, which Lamamra did not appear to put any faith in either.

19. (C) Carter said that since the July 14 ICC indictment Khartoum has been reluctant to do anything. The United States strongly supports Bassole's low key approach. Carter noted the ICC debate going on behind closed doors at the AU, and stated categorically that at present, the United States is not inclined to change its position on an Article XVI deferral of the ICC indictment. Lamamra protested that Sudan had made progress on allowing UNAMID deployment, but that UNAMID itself had been slow to identify attack and transport helicopters as well as to deploy troops because of logistical, readiness of camps and troop contributing countries and equipment shortcomings. He proposed a high level international contact group to work on UNAMID deployment as well as the peace process; he guaranteed the GNU would comply.

¶10. (C) Lamamra announced that the AU has decided to establish a high level panel for Darfur, with -- and here he said he was about to deliver bad news, but Chairman Ping had already called him -- former South African President Thabo Mbeki as chairman. The panel would assemble legal experts from the AU and the Arab League countries to do a diagnosis of Sudanese law and to work towards a post-apartheid-South-Africa-like truth and reconciliation commission for Darfur, which would allow the Government of Sudan to establish its own war crimes tribunal.

¶11. (C) Carter said he did not want to see this panel competing with the ICC, or the Doha process, and warned that Sudan could easily exploit such a panel to divert attention from its own shortcomings. Carter said he saw the peace process moving forward regardless of whether there is an ICC arrest warrant served on Bashir or not. Lamamra asked to be permitted to see it differently. He argued that today, Bashir enjoys the support of the AU, of China, of Russia, and of much of the Arab world, but this support is conditional upon the cooperation he shows on a variety of issues: if the UNSC defers the arrest warrant for twelve months, and Bashir has done nothing, that support will evaporate.

¶12. (C) Shortley asked what deliverables the AU expected to see. The USG wants dramatic change, and is skeptical of Bashir's willingness to deliver. Carter said the international community has been down the road of negotiations and agreements many times, and we must see concrete action, up front. Lamamra said Sudan feels the United States, France, and the United Kingdom are fixated on regime change. The AU is planning a rollout of the high level panel before the ICC is forecast to issue its arrest warrant on February 9. Lamamra asked if the Qataris and the AU could meet with the U.S., UK, and France in New York next week, and Ambassador Yamamoto agreed to inform New York.

¶13. (C) Comment: The panel idea is clearly a distraction which is part of a plan to take the current pressure off Sudan and give Khartoum an additional twelve months. Judging from Lamamra, the AU does not have any idea what benchmarks it wants to establish to measure Bashir,s cooperation. That said, it would be unwise to voice strong opposition to the idea (casting the P3 against the AU), but rather to continue to make it clear that we do not support an Article XVI deferment and that progress on Darfur remains illusive.
End Comment.

¶14. (U) Acting A/S Carter approved this message prior to departing Addis.
YAMAMOTO